

Ecstasy and Other Club Drugs



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A new survey released by The Partnership for a Drug-Free America indicated that while fewer U.S. teen-agers are smoking marijuana, the percentage using the synthetic drug ecstasy has doubled since 1995.

The annual survey found that 10 percent of the young people surveyed reported trying ecstasy at least once, up from 7 percent last year and 5 percent 5 years ago. The Partnership for a Drug-Free America said this trial use of ecstasy has become comparable to teen trial use of cocaine and LSD and exceeds the trial use of heroin.

Ecstasy, or methylenedioxy-meth-amphetamine (MDMA), is one of many drugs commonly referred to as "club drugs" or "designer drugs." Some club drugs are stimulants, some depressants, and some hallucinogens. Some are prescription drugs that have been illegally diverted for abuse and others are illegally produced. Youth use of club drugs has risen largely due to the increasing popularity of all-night dance parties known as "raves" or "trances."

The novelty of some of these drugs has also contributed to their recent surge in use. Because these drugs are relatively new, some youth think that taking them is safe because their negative effects have not been widely reported or youth think reports are exaggerated and these drugs will not have harmful effects for them.

The fact is that these drugs can cause serious health problems and, particularly when used in combination with other drugs or alcohol, they can be deadly. The club drug scene is constantly evolving, with various trends and newly developed drugs emerging all of the time. The following is an overview of MDMA (ecstasy), Gamma-hydroxy butyrate (GHB), ketamine, LSD, methamphetamine, and Rohypnol, some of the most common club drugs:

MDMA

What It Is—MDMA, commonly called "ecstasy," is a synthetic, mind-altering drug with both stimulant and psychedelic effects. MDMA is the most commonly used club drug. While drug use among adolescents has generally held steady or decreased over the past few years, the use of MDMA has increased.

Effects—MDMA's psychedelic effects are milder than those produced by hallucinogens such as LSD. Users feel more energetic and experience heightened

moods and feelings. Users claim they experience feelings of closeness with others and a desire to touch them.

Hazards—MDMA can increase confusion, depression, sleep problems, anxiety, and paranoia that may last for weeks after taking the drug. Physical effects can include impaired coordination, muscle tension, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, nausea, blurred vision, faintness, and dehydration. Chronic abuse of MDMA can harm the neurons in the brain that release serotonin, a chemical that plays a role in regulating memory and thought capacity.

Also called Adam, decadence, ecstasy, eve, herbal bliss, gum, love drug, mdma, rib, shabu, wafers, XTC.

GHB

What It Is—Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB) is an inexpensive sedative often manufactured in home laboratories with recipes and ingredients purchased on the Internet. Therefore, the strength and purity of GHB varies greatly. GHB can be produced in clear liquid, white powder, tablet, and capsule forms.

Effects—People who willingly take GHB do so to relieve anxiety and produce relaxation.

Hazards—At higher doses, GHB can slow breathing and heart rate to dangerous levels. Users simply cannot know how much they are getting. Overdoses are common, resulting in coma and sometimes death from respiratory arrest. GHB has been increasingly used in incidents of date rape. The drug is odorless and tasteless, so it can be slipped into drinks and ingested without the victim's knowledge.

Also called Battery acid, date rape drug, fantasy, Georgia Home Boy, liquid G, liquid, salty water, scoop, soap, zonked.

Ketamine

What It Is—Ketamine is an anesthetic intended primarily for veterinary use. It is produced in a liquid form that can be injected and as a white powder that can be snorted or smoked with marijuana or tobacco.

Effects—In larger doses, ketamine causes a reaction similar to that of phencyclidine (PCP), such as dream-like states and hallucinations.

Hazards—Low-dose intoxication results in impaired attention, learning ability, and memory. At higher doses, ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor function, depression, and potentially fatal respiratory problems.

Also called Bump, breakfast cereal, green, jet fuel, honey oil, k-hole, kay jay, new ecstasy, purple, special K, super C.

LSD

What It Is—Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) is a hallucinogen sold in tablet, capsule, and, occasionally, liquid form. Often LSD is added to absorbent paper, such as blotter paper, and divided into small squares, with each square representing one dose.

Effects—LSD produces delusions and visual hallucinations. Senses may seem to “crossover,” giving the user the feeling of “hearing colors” or “seeing sounds.” Physical effects include increased heart rate and blood pressure, loss of appetite, tremors, sleeplessness, and dry mouth.

Hazards—Some LSD users experience severe, terrifying thoughts and feelings. Users may experience flashbacks within a few days or more than a year after LSD use. Chronic users may manifest long-lasting psychoses, such as schizophrenia or severe depression.

Also called Acid, star, vodka acid, battery acid, blotter acid, blue acid, lime acid, microdot, Owsley's acid, sugar cubes.

Methamphetamine

What It Is—Methamphetamine is a toxic, potent, and addictive stimulant that primarily affects the central nervous system. The drug is produced in makeshift or home laboratories from relatively inexpensive ingredients. Methamphetamine is available in several forms; it can be smoked, snorted, injected, or orally ingested.

Effects—Methamphetamine produces temporary hyperactivity, euphoria, and a strong craving for more of the drug.

Hazards—Methamphetamine use increases the user's heart rate, blood pressure, rate of breathing, and agitation. It frequently results in violent and erratic behavior. Chronic use has been associated with increased nervousness, irritability,

memory loss, and paranoia. Methamphetamine in high dose usage can produce psychotic, violent, and erratic behavior. Withdrawal can produce severe depression.

Also called Chalk, crystal, crank, glass, hot ice, ice, meth, speed.

Rohypnol®

What It Is—Rohypnol is approved for prescription use in other countries as a sedative and pre-surgery anesthetic, but it is not approved in the United States.

Effects—Rohypnol, much like GHB, is ingested to produce relaxation

Hazards—Rohypnol's effects include decreased blood pressure, dizziness, confusion, visual disturbances, and drowsiness. The sedative and toxic effects of Rohypnol are aggravated if taken with alcohol. Rohypnol is tasteless and odorless and has been used in incidents of date rape. It also produces a kind of amnesia while in a person's system, making legal prosecution of date rape perpetrators difficult.

Also called—Date rape drug, forget pill, la roche (Hoffmman-La Roche is the drug's manufacturer), lunch money drug, mind erasers, pingus, roach, R-2, ropies, rope, roofies, ruffies, wofies.

What is a rave?

A rave is an all-night dance party held in a large, vacant building or outdoors. Raves are considered special events with the latest music, elaborate light shows, and patrons who go from rave-to-rave. Many teens are drawn to raves because they are perceived as being an "underground" or counter-culture experience. Most raves don't serve alcohol so they can legally admit teens.

The fact that a rave is alcohol-free creates an illusion of safety in the minds of many parents. But raves are big business, usually organized by individuals and groups regularly in a particular city or region. Upcoming raves are well advertised by flyers and Web sites. Just type "rave" into an Internet search engine...you may be surprised at the number of sites you'll find devoted to publicizing the rave phenomenon.